



Cairngorms Campaign



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Response from the Cairngorms Campaign to the Cairngorms Park Authority's Main Issues Report for the Local Development Plan 2020 - 2025

HOUSING NUMBERS

We are hugely disappointed and despairing of yet another Cairngorms National Park Authority Main Issues Report that has ignored the views of residents and organisations that are appalled by the number of houses planned for the National Park. We have responded to previous Local Development Plan and Park Plan consultations and taken a great deal of time and thought to lay out our views. Consequently it feels like yet another waste of time and the statement on page 5 of the MIR saying that this is "an important opportunity to get involved in shaping the future of the National Park" is misleading. Previous experience has shown us that the CNPA has already made up its mind. This is contrary to the Scottish Governments intention of genuinely involving people in Development Planning. We object to this approach.

As part of our response to this MIR we have attached our comments on the, what is now, current LDP 2015 - 2020, which remain valid, other than the specific references to numbered paragraphs and pages. This documents our objections to the housing strategy proposed and explains an alternative approach. It also covers our comments on the use of the words "Sustainable Development" which continues to be used to describe any development that the CNPA wishes to approve, even including new housing estates and a "new town", An Camas Mòr. The MIR describes a plan that is not sustainable nor is it in line with the aims of the National Parks Act. The process which is used – one of landowner and developer led use of land has been challenged in many other places and is totally unacceptable in a National Park. It leads to the inevitable result – loss of land to houses that do not meet the needs of the local inhabitants.

In our 2013 response to what is now the current LDP we laid out in some detail why the process still being followed by the CNPA has and continues to fail to meet the needs of "affordable" housing, why it has led to excessive house building that is damaging landscapes, destroying wildlife and destroying any sense of community with the villages. Any idea that these new developments are any more "sympathetic" in design with the cultural heritage is clearly rubbish – one only has to look at the most recent housing developments to see this.

In our response to the most recent "National Park Partnership Plan 2017 – 2022 consultation we responded to "Big Issue questions on housing". We have attached that to this response as it continues to describe how we think housing needs within the National Park should be met.

MAIN ISSUE 5 Affordable housing.

We fully support the statement that affordable housing built within the CNPA must be affordable **in perpetuity** and that must be included in the CNPA policies and strictly adhered to. However we think that a clearer definition of affordable is required, for example the background analysis provides examples of income and prices and the definition of affordable could be related to this. We suspect to be meaningful it is likely that at least two prices of “affordable” are likely to be more useful than one and linked to income levels, a policy already used by housing associations. Does affordable include “social housing”, which we consider a priority. How would the criteria for affordable ensure that it did not end up as second homes, holiday lets, commuter accommodation etc. and was only available only to people that work and/or have lived in the National Park for much of their working lives or have a “social need”. What is intended behind these terms needs careful definition to ensure housing needs are met.

While we applaud the move to smaller houses we feel this statement must be made much tighter on the basis that the analysis shows that there is enough housing stock within the National Park to meet the population needs. To avoid larger than needed houses being built we would suggest a number of 90% of new stock should be two bedrooms and encourage a move to small storey apartment blocks within the larger settlements.

The CNPA planning process and call-in also needs to take notice of one off developments when existing stock is extended. It is typical for an old building to be purchased and the new owners to significantly extend it. Cumulatively this is having an effect.

We would add to the background analysis that housing pressures in some parts of the National Park are due to the commuter effect, most obviously to Aberdeen and Inverness. An example of this can be seen in the number of houses provided in the plan for “Dinnet” which would join up the Deeside corridor from Ballater to Aberdeen into a series of housing developments that are unsuitable for a gateway to a National Park. The dualling of the A9 on the west side will only increase this pressure and the LDP must have measures and policies in place to counter this.

We remain of the belief that any new developments should be for high quality social housing that enhances the cultural heritage, for rent, held in perpetuity with some opportunities for shared equity arrangements for those that may wish to start saving for a house purchase.

MAIN ISSUE 2 DESIGNING GREAT PLACES

While understanding that this is Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) it needs some detailed and thorough clear thinking about how to apply it in a National Park. We would suggest that for this LDP while recognising the need to adopt the SPP requirements the National Park Authority should commit to spending time with interested bodies and develop more detail. For example the word “distinctive” and “creating a sense of identity” could be interpreted in two completely different ways, one that means a development stands out and is distinctly different from its surroundings and another that says it fits in with a larger sense of identity, but is this the settlement, part of a settlement or the whole of the National Park?

The “welcoming” including signage is also overused. Scotland, and the Cairngorms used to be valued for the fact that you could drive the roads without seeing signs. Already we have along, what used to be open moorland roads too many signs advertising “Welcome to the moor”, with instructions on how to behave, photography exhibitions, potteries and cafés, human landmarks where there are

quality vistas and signs continue to proliferate. While recognising the need for businesses to attract customers and for visitor guidance these can all too easily detract from the landscape of the National Park and the feelings associated with it.

The section on “easy to move around” and to encourage car use to take second place is a more obvious one for a National Park but the advertising of the “snow road” and the NE 250 are already having a detrimental effect on cycling along what were quite spectacular routes. How will we deal with this conflict?

MAIN ISSUE 6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We suggest that instead of an aim to increase the number of jobs in the Cairngorms National Park that the aim is for every job to provide a living wage and for new businesses to be such that they are in keeping with the number one aim of the Park and as a minimum do not detract from this.

This section comes across as being based on the “opportunities” available from the dualling of the A9 which conjures up images of roadside services similar to that found in many other places which is not attractive.

We’d suggest that the early impressions of visitors should be views that are in keeping with the number one aim of the National Park, using indigenous fauna and stone with minimal and carefully designed signage and that best examples from other regions are studied.

MAIN ISSUE 7 IMPACTS ON NATURA DESIGNATIONS

We find it incredible that this MIR limits the scope of this section to using “mitigation” to “compensate” for development on just two species, Capercaillie and the freshwater pearl mussel. This is a minimum standard that would be required anywhere under European Legislation.

This section should cover the whole range of species that make up the rich mosaic of the National Park and not just those that are listed as threatened and protected. The number one aim of the National Park is to “enhance” and not to “mitigate”.

There is a major problem with “mitigation” in that if it doesn’t prove to be effective than you are too late. There are so many complex interactions that it is very difficult to lay out and enforce “mitigation” measures.

We suggest that if the CNPA wants to meet its No 1 aim then it needs to be much more ambitious and broader thinking than described in this MIR.

Policy changes are needed to reflect this.

MAIN ISSUE 10 LAND MANAGEMENT IN UPLAND AREAS

We support the proposed change with **a presumption against development** and encourage the CNPA to go further with addressing the problem of hill tracks and their impact on upland habitat, drainage and landscape. There has been an ever increasing number of tracks in the years since the National Park was formed, increasing width of new and existing and consequent use of by larger vehicles and informal tracks made by all-terrain vehicles and quad bikes. The disturbance to breeding birds on the red and protected list is significant and agricultural use is often claimed when

in fact the tracks are used for grouse shooting. Work by LINK indicates that the vast majority of new tracks in Scotland are associated with the driven grouse moor shooting industry.

We would prefer that the CNPA gets a clear map of ALL existing tracks formal and informal and monitors this regularly and accurately and takes action against any changes unless they are approved under the planning system and meet best practice standards. We would support the CNPA in any efforts to make this happen.

Attachments 1 & 2 see below

From Susan Matthews, on behalf of the Directors and members of the Cairngorms Campaign

ATTACHMENT 1

The Cairngorms Campaign comments on the Cairngorm National Park Authority's Proposed Local Development Plan (2015-2020), as submitted

5TH July 2013

Comments on CNP proposed Local Development Plan

The Cairngorms Campaign welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Local Development Plan (LDP). We intend to focus our comments upon the most important aspects of the LDP.

Introduction – the four Aims of the Scottish National Parks - paragraphs, 1.10 -1.13

We believe there is an inherent contradiction within the four aims, in particular between the first aim *“to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area”* and the other three aims, which is not properly resolved by the instruction that in cases of perceived conflict *“greater weight”* shall be given to the first aim. Without more guidance as to how much, or how little, *“greater weight”* should be added, the NPA is free to decide in favour of development which damages the natural heritage, yet claim that its decision is consistent with the statutory aims. We believe that the NPA should always, and strongly, have in mind the reason why its area has been designated as a National Park, which is because of its outstanding natural heritage importance, and ensure that all its decisions aim to conserve and enhance that natural heritage.

We further comment upon the key word *“sustainable”* in the fourth aim: *“To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities”*. *“Sustainable development”* has been defined in many ways, including some which are so vague as to be effectively meaningless, and to include all development, almost regardless of the damage it may do to the environment and natural heritage. For some action to be *sustainable*, must mean that one can keep on doing it repeatedly without damaging the resources involved. Self-evidently, this does not include the one-off construction of large housing estates upon sites which are at present woodland or heathland or agricultural within a National Park. The LDP itself defines *“sustainable development”* as *“development which uses the resources and special qualities of the National Park in such a way that they are used and enjoyed by current generations and that future generations can continue to use and enjoy them”*, and even this definition (which we consider to be unduly vague) would also seem to exclude construction of large housing estates and a New Town on countryside land which can be used and enjoyed by current generations, but which will be totally destroyed for future generations by developments such as are proposed for An Camas Mor and other sites in the LDP. Accordingly, we **object** to the development of An Camas Mor as it is not *“sustainable”*.

We also note that the fourth aim is *“to promote sustainable development .. of the area’s communities”*. At present, there is no community at An Camas Mor, which is undeveloped countryside, and has never been populated or built upon. Construction of a New Town upon a wholly undeveloped site cannot reasonably be termed *“development of .. the area’s communities”*. This aim directs the NPA towards the existing communities of the area, and to argue that it permits or encourages the development of entirely new *“communities”* stretches the wording intolerably.

As there is no community at An Camas Mor, any development of that site is outwith the authority of the aims of the National Parks (Scotland) Act, and would therefore appear to be *ultra vires*. For this reason also, we **object** to the development of An Camas Mor.

For all these reasons, we urge the NPA to reconsider its proposals for large scale housing estates and the New Town at An Camas Mor, and to refocus its activities upon the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage of the Cairngorms area, to ensure that the exceptional qualities of the area will be available for future generations to enjoy. If the CNPA presides over the wanton and knowing destruction of large areas of the countryside within the Cairngorms National Park, this will be shameful for Scotland and an irreversible loss for the future.

The Policies

The Cairngorms Campaign finds the layout of Policies, none of which are numbered, most unhelpful. It appears designed to obfuscate use of the Policies and confuse anyone wishing to comment to the CNPA on matters relating to the park. The previous LP contained Policies that were numbered, discrete and reasonably clear. The Cairngorms Campaign **objects** to the format of Policies and wishes to see shorter, discrete, numbered Policies that can more easily be referred to.

New Housing Development- the Policies, para 3.6 – “Housing in Settlements”

We believe that some wording or conditions must have inadvertently been omitted from the first part of the policy dealing with housing in settlements, as it appears to approve of all and any development proposals for a site designated within the LDP: the policy reads *“Proposals will be supported where they: a) occur within a site identified within the Local Development Plan; or b) reinforce and enhance the character of the settlement...”*. Surely the “or” should be “and”? Or is it really the intention of the CNPA to support all development proposals for allocated sites, regardless of their effect upon the character of that settlement or otherwise? The Cairngorms Campaign therefore **objects** to policy “Housing in Settlements” since it would allow the CNPA to support proposals on allocated sites that do not reinforce and enhance the character of the settlement.

The inevitable effect of allowing large parcels of land within the National Park to be developed by major commercial developers is that these will give high density housing estates with a uniformity of appearance and design which is quite incompatible with the character of the Cairngorms and their surrounding historic towns and villages. Whilst there is certainly a need for additional housing which is affordable for local workers and those with family requirements to live within the area, we believe it is unacceptable for the CNPA to base its strategy upon the construction of at least three times as many open market houses which are likely to be taken by commuters, holiday makers or retirees. Demand for housing in one of the most scenically attractive areas of the country will always exist, and trying to meet such a demand will lead to irreparable damage to the scenery, the wildlife and biodiversity, and the special qualities which define the Cairngorms and their surrounding straths.

Landscape

The special landscape qualities of the Park, which the LDP quite rightly praises, do not comprise man-made features, but depend upon the wild scenery, the impressive mountain ranges, the steep valleys, glacial rocks, lochs, forests and moorland, and the interplay of these natural features. In so far as the Cairngorms landscape includes man-made features, these always detract from the wildness, natural qualities and grandeur. Therefore, it is presumptuous, or disingenuous, to try to pretend that any newly built development can possibly *“conserve or enhance”* the landscape of the

Cairngorms. To claim that *“Ensuring development conserves and enhances the quality of these landscapes underpins delivery of all four aims of the National Park”* (para 7.6) must be a hollow claim, and it would be better if the CNPA openly recognised that man-made developments can, at best, only fail to damage the landscape – and even then, only if they are well hidden.

Past performance may be an unreliable guide to the future, but it is undeniable that the existing areas of large development, such as the sprawling estates, large hotels and ribbon development of Aviemore, are a prominent and unfortunate blot on the landscape and significantly compromise views of, and from, the Cairngorms. The Cairngorms Campaign believes that the LDP should make real efforts to improve the damage to the landscape caused by existing housing and commercial developments, by, for example, requiring the planting of more trees, and encouraging the use of less prominent colours and more natural stonework, and should immediately desist from permitting any further large housing developments which will inevitably, and all too predictably, further damage the landscape qualities of the National Park. The damage done to the landscape by excessive housing estates will last beyond present lifetimes, blighting the scenery and Cairngorms experience for generations to come.

To claim, as in para 7.7 that in the next five years *“we will have capitalised on opportunities for new development to enhance the landscape of the Park”* is wholly unrealistic and impossible to achieve, and the aim should be the more realistic one of trying to reduce past damage and impact, and ensure that no further irreparable harm is done to the special landscape of the area.

Accordingly, we support the policy which states that *“There will be a presumption against any development that does not conserve and enhance the landscape character and special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park, and in particular, the setting of the proposed development”* because we believe that if this policy is applied seriously, it must prevent any large housing or industrial developments within the Park.

We particularly support the adoption of the precautionary principle as set out in para 6.17: *“The precautionary principle will be applied where the impacts of a proposed development on internationally and nationally significant landscapes or natural heritage resources are uncertain but there is sound evidence for believing that significant irreversible damage could occur. Where the precautionary principle is justified, modifications to the proposal which would eliminate the risk of irreversible damage should be considered.”* (We believe that such modifications should be more than *“considered”* - they should be essential.) However, we **object** to the seemingly contradictory wording of the next sentence: *“The precautionary principle will not be used to impede development unnecessarily”*- primarily because it is vacuous and adds nothing to the proper control of development. If, as is presumed, there is sound evidence for believing that significant irreversible damage could occur from a development, then impeding that development would certainly not be unnecessary, and the CNPA should have the courage to say so and insist upon stopping such damage.

We very much approve of the recognition of the importance of wildness in appreciation of the Cairngorms (para 7.9). *“The impact of development on wildness is important and will be a fundamental factor in the application of this policy.”* It is undeniable that any man-made development reduces or destroys a perception of wildness, and the impact of development on broad views of, and from, the mountains should be given great importance.

Housing In Badenoch and Strathspey

Whilst housing issues are park wide, the following concentrates on Badenoch and Strathspey since that is the district for which the CC has greatest information.

The damage being caused to what is now largely the western part of the Cairngorms National Park was long ago recognised by planning professionals. In March, 1991, long before the national park came into being, before the Habitats Directive and Natura sites were established, before the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the hugely increased knowledge of local biodiversity of recent years, and before capercaillie were threatened with extinction in this their only remaining Scottish stronghold, Highland Regional Council's first draft Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan commented,

"... concern is emerging about the rate and scale of change in established villages. Unsympathetic cramming and expansion of communities is eroding their character and setting, threatening to overwhelm facilities, or creating imbalance in the social structure. There are major investment implications for the local authorities once such settlements exceed their natural limits or current infrastructure thresholds. Similarly in the countryside, stronger safeguards are needed to avoid servicing problems or compromising important heritage features and rural resources."

Since 1991, with a Badenoch and Strathspey population of then around 11,000 and a total housing stock of 5,600 homes, the settlement areas of Badenoch and Strathspey towns and villages have had the following numbers of new houses built within them:

Data on Housing Completions, Badenoch and Strathspey, 1991-2010 inclusive, from Highland Council

Aviemore	692
Boat of Garten	76
Carrbridge	123
Grantown	297
Kingussie	199
Nethy Bridge	180
Newtonmore	118
District Total	1900 (includes smaller settlements)

Yet, at the end of this period of unprecedented rapid growth (which actually continues back to the mid-1970s, with an average of 100 houses per year being built in Badenoch and Strathspey since that time) we are still told that there is an "overwhelming" need for more housing for local people.

Moreover, this period of rapid growth has been conducted under a policy, initiated by Highland Council and now continued by the CNPA, of providing 25% 'affordable' housing in larger schemes.

Is it not now obvious that this policy of excessive house-building:

1. is damaging the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The natural heritage is damaged by the physical destruction of habitats, such as native woodlands, flower and fungi rich meadows and lowland heaths in the building process itself, and also by the loss of rural landscapes and, more insidiously, by the effect of increased recreational disturbance on supposedly protected species, such as capercaillie, that are known from recent research to be susceptible to disturbance.

2. is not resulting in low-cost housing in the area – indeed, the **INTERNAL SPECIALIST RESPONSE** referred to above shows that the mean house price in the A30 area (area within 30 miles of Aviemore) was £211,787 in 2010, compared with £165,672 for Highland generally and £163,429 for Scotland as a whole. The hypothesis that providing a plentiful supply of new houses will reduce prices to an affordable level for local people is falsified. The reason is simple: the hinterland from which prospective purchasers are derived is huge compared to the size of the housing area in the national park. In other words, the demand is far greater than the supply. Increasing the supply tenfold would make little impact, since it still could not meet demand. It is only in situations where the supply is more equal to the demand that increasing the supply will help to lower the cost. Even if (indeed *when* on current trends) the landscape and rural communities of the national park had been very severely damaged by over-development, they would still provide relatively attractive locations for people from industrial areas looking for second or retirement homes: the demand would remain. Yet the CNPA has no overall policy on the limits to growth, nor even any recognition of the need for such a policy: we are faced with the actuality of endless rampant growth, continuing attrition, degradation and destruction of classic Cairngorms countryside and villages, all the while accompanied by statements of professed concern and promises of protection for such assets, which when faced with the pressure for development prove to be almost worthless.
3. above all, has simply failed to deliver that which was, and now continues by the CNPA to be, promised. This policy of promoting a rate of house-building greatly in excess of local need is said to be necessary to provide housing for local people. Yet at the end of some forty years of this policy we are still told that there is an “overwhelming need” for more housing for local people, for example, “Park board member Willie McKenna said there was a desperate need for more houses in the area” (Press and Journal, 4th July 2013, p.7).

When a policy has so spectacularly failed to deliver what was promised, whilst at the same time causing substantial and irreversible damage to settlements and the natural heritage, is it not time for a reappraisal? Yet NO such substantial assessment of the benefits and dis-benefits of this policy has been undertaken by the CNPA to our knowledge: it just ploughs on regardless, causing more and more damage to the national park and its communities.

The present policy of allowing large housing developments is damaging villages and their communities, damaging landscapes, destroying wildlife and depriving small local builders of a sustainable livelihood, whilst feeding an unsustainable demand from large landowners and large building companies, who generally do not use local workers, for more and more housing. It is the very opposite of what should be occurring in a national park, as has been learnt from bitter experience elsewhere. Sooner or later the CNPA must grasp the nettle of appropriate control of development.

The Cairngorms Campaign therefore **objects** to the scale of overall development inherent in the Community Information (pages 50-188) part of the pLDP and of the Policy outlined on page 17/18 of the pLDP.

Instead, we urge the adoption of Residency Criteria (or similar) and we **object** to the absence of residency criteria in the LDP.

Such Residency Criteria were outlined in the first draft of the CNPA Local Plan 2005 as part of Policy 38, requiring that new-build houses in the national park are restricted to:

- i) Existing residents of the National Park (over the age of 18), who have permanently resided in the area for at least the last 3 years and who now need new accommodation.*
- ii) A head of household who is or whose partner is in or is taking up full-time permanent employment in a business within the National Park.*
- iii) Elderly or disabled persons requiring sheltered or otherwise more suitable accommodation who already live permanently within the National Park.*
- iv) Persons having to leave tied accommodation within the National Park.*
- v) In all cases above the applicant must prove that they are currently unhoused or inadequately housed.*

The rationale behind the use of residency criteria is explored and explained in the attached Paper **"Housing Provision in Scottish National Parks"** by Bill McDermott, April 2012. This paper, and others produced directly by the Peak District National Park are attached to the **Cairngorms Campaign pLDP Representation Appendix**, sent separately. The Paper concludes:

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 This paper posits the proposition that the experience of the Peak District National Park is something that the CNPA should seek to emulate, irrespective of the legislative differences. The scenarios and projections for housing communities in the Cairngorms National Park have reached a stage where the Authority is being cavalier with the environment which it was established to protect. It has acted as if it was the housing authority, with senior members of the NPA now regarding affordable rural housing as its primary concern. As the Peak Park shows it is possible to work constructively with others to provide much needed affordable homes but recognise that at the end of the day the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage in a national park trumps all other considerations in the final analysis when conflicts appear.*
- 4.2 The first National Park Plan of the CNPA projected a stable population over a period of 25 years from 2007. The current draft of the new NPP now uses new figures from the Registrar General to declare that on current projections, the Park population will increase by 20% over the next 20 years in comparison to a decrease of 12.5% for the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. On examining the population projections in more detail, the increase in population is represented by a nil increase in the 0-5 age group and a 43% increase in the over 65 age group. This begins to look like a self-fulfilling prophecy where the open market houses being built to secure a proportion of affordable homes actually provide the accommodation for immigrant retirees as well as commuters to work outside the Park. It adds import to the statement by a policy officer at the Peak Park who said that the appropriate vision for a national park spans a time scale of 100 or more years. In that context the cyclical problems of the housing market are not the most important consideration. "You can't build your way out of a cyclical housing supply problem".*
- 4.3 From the range of comments which have come forward in the consultations for the NPP and the Main Issues Report of the Local Development Plan, it is clear that there is increasing resistance to the imposition of developer-led housing in the Cairngorms National Park. With a projected target*

of 3,000 houses (25% affordable) over the next 20 years at a time when the PDNPA have projected 500-1,000 houses (all affordable), the question that the PDNPA asked itself in 1989 must come to the fore. Can the Cairngorms National Park landscape and natural heritage cope with the present rate of house building and if not what provisions are being made for a long term vision when the tap is turned off? It is clear from the Peak Park that this is possible and indeed publicly acceptable, but there is a further problem with the way that the CNPA does business and that is illustrated by a social attitudes survey commissioned for the NPP.

- 4.4 When residents and visitors were asked what they liked about the National Park, a common answer was that residents and tourists liked the 'planned, stone-built villages' The developer-led approach to house building, epitomised by Aviemore, High Burnside, Kincaig and Carrbridge do not meet that criterion. They are urban intrusions in the landscape of the National Park and are the direct result of allocating large parcels of Greenfield land which developers then fill with identikit houses unfitted to a national park setting. The Peak Park has avoided the worst of this kind of development by insisting on stone and slates in discrete, small scale developments which blend with the historic architecture. More often than not the land selected is vacant and unused so the end result is enhancement of the Park environment and a win/win for Park residents who meet the residency criteria. Discussions with CNPA officers suggest that their solution lies in better design of housing, but it hard to imagine that in a developer-led approach where there are stipulations required for cross subsidy that this situation will improve. It is the scale of the developments and their locations which need to be addressed.*
- 4.5 It is clear that there remains a large gulf between the policies and actions of the CNPA over the issue of housing and the views of many environmental NGOs. Insofar as these policies are driven by the Scottish Government's approach to economic development and a failure to recognise the special planning policies which should apply to national parks, the NGOs can seek to make representation to Government for a change of course. In particular there is a generalised requirement for all planning authorities, including NPAs to meet targets for supply of land for housing and to use the cross-subsidy method for private developers to provide affordable houses. As has been shown from the example of the Peak District National Park a more appropriate mechanism for meeting housing need in a national park setting is to remove references to targets and to identifying a 'generous supply' of land for housing and replacing it with a Rural Exceptions Policy in concert with local occupancy restrictions. Whilst this methodology has its detractors, such detractors invariably come from the developers, the housing authorities and the social scientists all of whom focus on how to provide affordable homes without reference to the environmental consequences.*
- 4.6 The Peak Park has accepted that the consequences of allocating a generous supply of land for housing is no longer sustainable. The PDNPA is not a housing authority, nor is the CNPA. The fourth aim, to promote sustainable development, has been wrongly used by the CNPA to justify acting like any other planning or housing authority when in reality there should be no real difference in approach between the Peak and the Cairngorms, both having a primary responsibility to conserve the natural and cultural heritage. If the CNPA finds itself to have acted illegally in the adoption of its Local Plan, then it is to be hoped that the example of the Peak Park will offer a new direction and perhaps even a change of heart over such developments as An Camas Mor.*

Specific Settlement Proposals

An Camas Mor

The Cairngorms Campaign **objects** to the inclusion of the proposed new town of An Camas Mor in the LDP.

“An Camas Mòr will have the distinction of being the only new community planned for a National Park.” (para 14.7) It is certainly distinctive for a National Park Authority to be promoting construction of a New Town in the middle of its National Park, unique within the UK and probably

unique within any National Park anywhere in the world. Many of the National Parks in England face at least the same pressure for additional housing as the Cairngorms, but have found other ways to handle the challenge, without encouraging large developments of market-value housing.

“An Camas Mòr will be internationally acclaimed as an exemplar of sustainable development and building design in a very sensitive location. It will be an inspiration and a delight.” Such desperate and unrealistic wishful thinking has no place in a policy document such as the LDP.

We have already set out various objections which should cause the members of the CNPA to rethink their support for An Camas Mor, and we believe that they should accept the opportunity now to reconsider what has clearly become a mistaken policy. To try to defend the construction of a New Town on a greenfield site in a sensitive part of the National Park risks lasting damage to Scotland’s reputation as an exemplar of sustainability.

To the public, the very idea of a New Town in a National Park is ludicrous, and literally incredible – virtually everyone we speak to finds it almost impossible to believe that the Cairngorms National Park Authority really supports such an idea, and the public has most generously donated thousands of pounds to our legal challenge in order to try to prevent it. We deeply regret that the judiciary has found that the plan is not so unreasonable that it should be overturned. The original plan for a new town at Cambusmore was formulated many years before the National Park was established, and is still obviously supported by the land-owner and prospective developer for financial reasons, but we believe that any rational consideration of the changed circumstances shows that the proposal should now be abandoned. Independent Reporters to the Local Plan Inquiry found it to be unnecessary, and we believe the CNPA should review their report and accept that An Camas Mor is inappropriate and extremely damaging to the Cairngorms area, and to the concept of a National Park.

“An Camas Mòr will be an inclusive and vibrant community with a demographically balanced resident population. It will embrace diversity and provide for all abilities. It will be recognisably ‘Cairngorms’. It will be a real community, not a holiday village or second home enclave, and will provide the range of facilities commensurate with that status”. (para 14.26) – how is the CNPA to ensure the demographic balance? Perhaps by vetting all prospective residents to ensure they fit within pre-determined quotas of sex and age? How will the CNPA ensure that it is not occupied by workers who commute into Inverness daily, with all the additional travel this would involve? How will the CNPA prevent it becoming a holiday village or second home enclave? This appears to imply that the CNPA will have some ability to set residency or occupancy criteria, and if this is possible for An Camas Mor, why is it not possible for the rest of the National Park? We can only conclude that this is an example of double standards: the use of residency criteria can be used to promote An Camas Mor, but is unable to be used, according to the CNPA, to control development in the park as a whole.

The LDP recognises the potential impact of An Camas Mor upon five European designated sites, and hence the need for measures to protect them and their biodiversity both during construction and ever afterwards. The entire site is within the Cairngorms Mountain National Scenic Area. The recognition of the risk of impacts upon a number of Natura 2000 sites will involve costly protection, and the requirement for a comprehensive range of measures to protect the biodiversity, and the requirement for substantial developer contributions towards infrastructure works will also increase developer costs. In view of all these essential requirements, it is inevitable that the cost of developing An Camas Mor will be very high, implying that the cost of houses there will be correspondingly much higher than elsewhere. Is it reasonable for the CNPA to continue to claim that the development is necessary and will make a significant contribution to the provision of a full range of affordable housing? We believe that the pressures of costs will inevitably force the CNPA into diluting the unrealistically high standards it is setting out as an aspiration, and that An Camas Mor will end up as an undistinguished extension to Aviemore, which will now extend across both banks of the Spey, forming a large and unbalancing conglomeration within the National Park, dominating the other settlements by virtue of its sheer size and expansion, and characterising the National Park as the home of unattractive urban sprawl rather than a place of majestic scenery and wildlife.

Other Settlements

Nethy Bridge

The Cairngorms Campaign **objects** to the inclusion of NB H1 and H2 in the LDP.

This proposal would,

1. destroy an area of woodland of high biodiversity value and listed in the Ancient Woodland Inventory (and damage similar surrounding areas of woodland by disturbance, pollution, fragmentation and introduction of invasive species), contrary to Scottish Planning Policy, Feb. 2010 p.29 para 146.
2. threaten the viability of continuing use of the area by European Protected Species, Otter, primarily due to increased disturbance from domestic pets, particularly dogs.
3. destroy habitat and dreys of Schedule 5 species, red squirrel
4. increase disturbance of capercaillie in Abernethy Spa and Craigmore SPA and adjacent Culstank Moss, and in School Wood itself, in which capercaillie continue to be occasionally reported despite their very low overall population.

Carrbridge

The Cairngorms Campaign **objects** to the inclusion of Carrbridge H1 and H2 in the LDP.

These proposals would,

1. destroy an area of native pine woodland of high biodiversity value (and damage similar surrounding areas of woodland by disturbance, pollution, fragmentation and introduction of invasive species), contrary to Scottish Planning Policy, Feb. 2010 p.29 para 146.
2. destroy an area of species rich grassland.

Glenmore

The Cairngorms Campaign **objects** to the extension of the settlement boundary across the road to the south and west and also into the Special Area of Conservation. The Cairngorms Campaign considers that there is no justification for extending the settlement boundary beyond the footprint of the present small settlement on the north east side of the road.

**APPENDIX to the Cairngorms Campaign comments on the Cairngorms National Park
Authority's Local Development Plan Consultation July 2013**

Housing Provision in Scottish National parks

- 1. Introduction**
Aims and Objectives

Methodology
- 2. The McCafferty Report**
- 3. The Peak Park Approach**
- 4. Conclusion**

Bill McDermott

11 April 2012

Introduction

Aims and Objectives

- 1.1** The reason for this review of housing policies operating in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA) arose out of a joint meeting, in November 2011, of members of the National Parks Task Force (NPTF) of Scottish Environment LINK and CNPA officers and members, during which there was broad agreement on a range of policy issues covering the aims of the Park Authority, but comprehensive and fundamental difficulties with the approaches taken by CNPA to local needs housing. In essence, this review seeks to challenge the efficacy of the cross subsidy approach which results in the provision of new housing much in excess of the actual social need and which therefore *ipso facto* creates unnecessary conflict with the primary reasons for the designation of the National Park, which is based on the area's outstanding natural and cultural heritage. The baseline research evidence on local needs housing from Andrew McCafferty Associates, commissioned by the CNPA, is examined in detail for accuracy of fact and interpretation and compared with a fact-gathering exercise to one of the comparison sites – the Peak District National Park in Derbyshire.

Methodology

- 1.2** A study visit to the Peak District National Park in Derbyshire was undertaken over two full days to discuss with National Park policy officers a series of questions which had been sent to them previously (see Appendix A). In addition, arrangements were made to meet with the Peak Park Rural Housing Association's chief executive and to obtain contact numbers in one of the District Housing Authorities for later discussion. A visit was also made to an open day for newly completed local needs housing in one of the Park's rural settlements to enable an assessment to be made of the nature and quality of new, affordable housing provision and the regime employed to grant occupancies.

2.0 The McCafferty Report

- 2.1** The CNPA commissioned Andrew McCafferty Associates to examine different mechanisms which are currently employed to provide affordable homes for local needs across Scotland. He also extended that search to English and Welsh national parks where a number of different approaches are considered dependent on local conditions. The CNPA set out ten points which they required to be addressed. These were: -

- A description of the mechanism
- Where is the mechanism currently used?
- How is the option secured?
- Does it target local need?
- Does it deliver to local need households?
- Is it targeted at local need in subsequent owners/tenants?
- What is the potential/likely scale of house provision per annum? (100s, 10s, 1s)
- What effects has it had on the existing housing market?
- What other effects could/would the option have?
- What are the costs of administration for the mechanism?
- What other options is it compatible with?

2.2 Clearly, the CNPA direction to McCafferty had the effect of confining the study to a mechanistic approach to providing affordable houses. Whilst references are made to the national park context, the environmental consequences of providing affordable housing by cross subsidy are not considered. Hence, the consultant can state the following: -

'.....it is very important that a proper understanding is given of the context in which the planning mechanisms presented are based. Planning policies must be 'fit for purpose' and when addressing issues there are no 'one size fits all' solutions.

This statement is made as a presage to dismiss the range of mechanisms operating in the English and Welsh national parks. For he then goes on to state: -

*'It would be very tempting, (though simplistic) for example, to assume that if a mechanism is in operation in English and Welsh national parks, then it is also appropriate for national parks in Scotland. However, as demonstrated in this report, not only are there **fundamental differences** (my emphasis) between the national parks in England and Wales and Scotland, there are also considerable differences between the individual national parks in England and Wales, both in their approach to, 'on face value' apparently similar policies and in the degree to which they share similar issues and pressures. The context which gives each national park its own unique character must be recognised when considering their policy approach, as indeed it should with the individual Scottish local authorities surveyed.'*

2.3 This is to say that since there is no easily identified, preferred option amongst the English and Welsh parks and they all have different reasons for arriving at specific housing policies, then their experience is not readily transferable. What is not examined, however is whether the mechanism chosen achieves the primary purpose of the designation - to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the national park in question. The *'fundamental differences'* between the Scottish and English and Welsh parks are then called in aid to create further distance between these models, so much so that mechanisms from English and Welsh parks are deemed to have little relevance to Scotland.

2.4. These *'fundamental differences'* relate to the additional aim given to Scottish national parks through the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The fourth aim of promoting sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities is missing from the English and Welsh legislation which in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949, updated by the Environment Act, 1995, merely requires the NPAs to have *'a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks, but without incurring significant expenditure in doing so, and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within areas of the National Park.'*

2.5 McCafferty concludes in setting the policy context that *'Understanding this critical difference in statutory aims is essential to enabling an appreciation of the approach taken by the national parks of England and Wales to provision of housing in general and to targeting local needs'*. He draws on a research paper prepared by Oxford-Brookes/Sheffield Hallam Universities – *'The Provision of Affordable and Supported Housing in England's National Parks'* (2004). The main points brought out of this by McCafferty are contained in the following excerpts:

'Because of the priority given to landscape conservation, NPAs have argued that national parks are not suitable places for expansive housing development and have adopted restrictive planning policies. In response to the housing needs of existing local populations (by inference their social and economic well-being), NPAs and government policies have attempted to frame planning policies that remain restrictive of new housing development, while making exceptions in certain circumstances for housing that meets local needs.'

In practice, however achievements are mixed. While some success in restricting general market housing developments has been achieved, in the majority of parks the provision of affordable housing remains inadequate.

It is clear that despite attempts to resolve this position (a difference in interpretation of statutory purposes and duties) the conflict remains – sometimes to the detriment of affordable housing provision. Despite carefully framed planning policies and a rhetoric of concern for affordable housing delivery, NPAs often prioritise landscape conservation. An elevation of the 'duty to the same level of importance as landscape protection could significantly stimulate the provision of affordable housing in national parks. While there may be incremental losses to landscape beauty, the benefits to the sustainability of local communities would almost certainly outweigh them.'

- 2.6** There is little doubt that the approach of the McCafferty paper is to find ways of providing affordable, local needs housing by using the fourth purpose of Scottish parks to secure that provision. The advocated elevation of a socio-economic 'duty' to a 'purpose' in the English and Welsh model further indicates the argument on which the case for housing rests. However, there is only a fleeting reference made in the Oxford-Brookes/Sheffield Hallam research to local occupancy restrictions or the Exceptions Policy in allocating sites for housing and a sweeping generalisation that losses to landscape beauty would be outweighed by the sustainability of local communities. No attention is given in the excerpts to ascertaining the actual need for housing and directly serving that need in the identified rural locations where it is required.
- 2.7** Local occupancy restrictions and exceptions sites are dealt with in the McCafferty paper at length but in each case, the reader is left in little doubt that these mechanisms are fraught with difficulties, are cumbersome, time consuming and to be avoided. Their legality is even questioned in reference to the Treaty of Rome allowing free movement of workers. However, no mention is made of the success of the policy in respect of the national parks which operate it, one being the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park where it has operated in a small section of the Park for over fifty years with few legal challenges.
- 2.8** The focus on mechanisms to provide affordable, local needs housing, which in origin arise from the commission given to McCafferty by the CNPA, necessarily put the NPA in the position of a pseudo-housing authority trying to determine how best to provide accommodation for its communities. But the CNPA is not a housing authority. While it has a socio-economic purpose to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities, its primary role which is restated in the Scottish Planning Policy is to safeguard the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The four aims of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 are to be pursued collectively, but when defined as purposes, any action taken by the authority must be based on the reason for the Parks designation and that reason is clearly to do with its outstanding natural and cultural heritage. So housing policies which militate against the maintenance and enhancement of this outstanding natural and cultural heritage could be viewed as breaching the legislation.

2.9 The Sandford Principle, born of the English and Welsh National Parks Policy Review Committee Report of 1974 which sought reconciliation between public enjoyment and preservation of natural beauty stated that priority must be given to natural beauty in cases where there was conflict. This Principle was adopted by the Scottish Government and given even stronger import in the Scottish Act by being implicit across all four aims of the legislation, including socio-economic development. In addition all development in Scottish national parks has to be 'sustainable', based on the Brundtland precepts.

2.10 The conclusions of the McCafferty Report reveal in the first paragraph the essence of the case being made for a continuation of the present policies of the CNPA to allow the vast majority of housing to be provided by private development to enable a proportion to be built to serve the affordable, local needs market.

'The purpose of this study was to look for evidence of planning mechanisms currently being used, to target new build housing provided for sale by the private sector at local need, that do not distort or increase pressure on the operation of housing markets. The simple conclusion is - that there are none.'

Leaving aside the traditional and commonly adopted policies to control development in the open countryside, the only mechanisms in use are local occupancy restrictions and exception sites. As exception sites only allow development of affordable housing this leaves local occupancy restrictions as the sole planning mechanism.'

2.11 McCafferty's comments on the distortion of the housing market through local occupancy restrictions are revealed as support for private developers, building mostly open market housing, to be the only realistic method of securing affordable homes in the Cairngorms National Park. He states that because of these distortions...'*development viability becomes a serious issue and stops developers building*'. What is being criticised here is that by using these mechanisms, the market distortion results in lower land values and therefore cheaper housing. The NPAs in England and Wales regard this as a bonus in terms of serving the public good, but in the Cairngorms National Park distorting the housing market to lower land values to enable new housing to become affordable presumably means that it is harder to obtain agreement from landowners to allow housing development on their land. Examination of the policies and procedures adopted by the Peak District NPA present a refreshing and imaginative alternative to this narrow, market-led view of providing affordable houses for local need.

2.12 It is notable that throughout the paper the nature of the local need for housing in the Cairngorms National Park is not revealed. In the housing studies done for the first Local Plan by the University of Manchester, it was clear that the vast majority of local housing need was for affordable property and there was very little demand for high end, open market housing. Mc Cafferty seems to agree that continues to be the case, but he turns that into an argument for more open market housing so that more affordable houses can be built. His last, concluding paragraph states: -

'If the fundamental issue is lack of affordable housing, what is the way forward? Certainly not by applying restrictive planning policies, which result in the private sector being unable to build. In the current economic climate, where public subsidies are likely to be severely curtailed, the delivery of much needed affordable housing will be increasingly dependent on the private sector. Combined with a strategy that enables open market housing to fund the delivery of affordable housing, those local authorities in Scotland who are actively engaging with the private sector to deliver discounted housing for sale and those organisations such as the Highland Housing Alliance and Highland Small

Communities Housing Trust working in partnership with a number of organisations, both public and private sector, are demonstrating the way forward to deliver housing for local needs.'

3.0 The Peak Park Approach

- 3.1** Detailed discussions with policy officers from the Peak Park revealed an entirely different approach to the local needs housing conundrum. Like the Cairngorms, the Peak Park housing situation has elements of second home ownership, commuter-based housing related to work in surrounding cities and retirees seeking the rural idyll. However with a population more than twice that of the Cairngorms, the difficulties encountered by young people in entering the housing market to remain in their communities are of the same order as experienced in the Cairngorms. In fact the annual completions of new build, affordable housing is of the order of less than fifty. This compares with a current figure of about 135, only a proportion of them being affordable, annual completions for the Cairngorms.
- 3.2** McCafferty made much of the fundamental differences in the legislative background between Scotland and England and Wales. But in practice, the commitment of Peak Park officers to deal with local needs housing was every bit as evident as that of the CNPA. Firstly the PDNPA takes an active role in securing affordable homes, by sharing costs with the housing authorities to provide for a Rural Housing Enabler to work with the Peak District Housing Association. As planning authority it has complete control over the nature and scale of housing development and it operates a local occupancy restriction policy to advantage local inhabitants who wish to continue living in the National Park.
- 3.3** The origins of the PDNPA housing policies go back to the 1980s when, in the light of council house sales, and the removal of a significant part of the rented sector, it was predicted that the number of houses in the National Park would double in 150 years if the then current rate of house building continued. This vision was put to public consultation amongst Park residents and firmly rejected. At the same time an exercise in carrying capacity was attempted in 4 rural villages and that too was firmly resisted. It became clear to the Authority that there was increasing resistance to house building at the expense of the National Park environment and as planning authority, it should only address the actual need for housing and find ways of devising mechanisms to accommodate that without recourse to open market housing.
- 3.3** The starting point for this approach to housing was to acknowledge that the NPA was not the housing authority and while it endeavoured to play its part in seeking out suitable sites for affordable homes, it would do so on the understanding that the bulk of the responsibility rested with the housing authorities who in turn respected the special position of the National Park as a designated landscape. In practice, pressure for new housing is mostly contained by the housing authorities external to the National Park.
- 3.4** The policy officers expressed the view that it was inappropriate for the National Park to be subject to the short, cyclical pressures of the housing market when what was required was a long term view of the landscape. This means in practice that critical analysis is applied to local need so that going forward, *'a significant slowing of new development is necessary to hand on the National Park to future generations in a relatively undeveloped state...Promoting social and economic well-being is not intended to outweigh or compromise National Park purposes; instead it should be part of pursuing them.'*
- 3.5** This approach is supported by the Government's Regional Plan which *'does not require the National Park to contribute to specific regional or sub-regional targets for either the level of population or*

numbers of homes. Instead the affordable housing needs of the National Park's communities are to be addressed in the context of National Park purposes.... The absence of a target was a mechanism to help slow down the rate of development of new, open market housing in the National Park, which had for many years been running at a higher rate than planned for, resulting in unjustified pressure on the landscape without meeting local housing needs.'

- 3.6** The lack of a target for housing led to a situation where the Development Plan, agreed by Ministers, was not required to allocate any land for housing development. This one action took the pressure off the development tap and put the NPA firmly in control. In future all new build housing in the National Park would use the Rural Exceptions Policy, whereby small rural sites within villages would be identified and negotiations would take place between the landowner and the Rural Housing Enabler Officer to agree a land value, typically 5%-10% of an equivalent-sized plot in similar areas surrounding the National Park. In some cases, if it was public sector land, the land would be granted free to a Housing Association. The land value consideration is the main component of providing affordable houses in the Peak Park. Such negotiations would be actively pursued after a detailed Housing Needs Analysis had been done for the village or area.
- 3.7** The Housing Need for affordable accommodation is a rigorous appraisal for an individual or for the local community. The distinction between demand and need has been recognised. The number of people actually needing a newly built or converted home in the National Park has by experience been far fewer when community assessments have been made in a particular area. When a community-based needs survey has been done, either by a group of individuals or a private developer wishing to provide affordable dwellings it has to be agreed in advance by the housing authority and the parish council. Past experience shows that generally only about 25% of those people initially expressing a need for an affordable house actually take up residence.
- 3.8** The local qualification for occupying a house in the National Park has proven to be robust in withstanding legal challenges. The NPA took advice of Counsel who recommended using an obligation under the planning acts rather than a planning condition. This means that any future occupant of an affordable dwelling has to accept the restriction as an obligation on his occupancy. The local occupancy restrictions, by this means, exists in perpetuity. When it comes to future occupants, people considering whether to buy on the open market, or to rent or buy restricted housing, or to build new restricted housing or to leave the National Park must be clear about the planning basis for valuation, given the reduced land values. The issue is that it may be possible to lose money in the context of the external housing market and restricted houses may be difficult to sell. That said, the advice is that an investment in a restricted occupancy property should only be made in order to stay in the National Park rather than as a financial tactic.
- 3.9** The affordable houses provided by the Peak Park Housing Association are of sound quality, energy efficient with low running costs. They are built to match the character of their surroundings—rigorous adherence to stone cladding and slate roofs and the developments occupy small footprints. The small scale nature of the developments are essential to the cultural history of the Park and the acceptance of the local communities is paramount. A recent application for the development of 60 affordable units on a zoned industrial, ex-creamery site was refused because it was deemed by the NPA and the community to be out of scale with a village of some 100 houses! By comparison, Kingussie has had to accept the likelihood of 350 open market houses on the strength of securing 50 affordable homes.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1** This paper posits the proposition that the experience of the Peak District National Park is something that the CNPA should seek to emulate, irrespective of the legislative differences. The scenarios and projections for housing communities in the Cairngorms National Park have reached a stage where the Authority is being cavalier with the environment which it was established to protect. It has acted as if it was the housing authority, with senior members of the NPA now regarding affordable rural housing as its primary concern. As the Peak Park shows it is possible to work constructively with others to provide much needed affordable homes but recognise that at the end of the day the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage in a national park trumps all other considerations in the final analysis when conflicts appear.
- 4.2** The first National Park Plan of the CNPA projected a stable population over a period of 25 years from 2007. The current draft of the new NPP now uses new figures from the Registrar General to declare that on current projections, the Park population will increase by 20% over the next 20 years in comparison to a decrease of 12.5% for the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. On examining the population projections in more detail, the increase in population is represented by a nil increase in the 0-5 age group and a 43% increase in the over 65 age group. This begins to look like a self-fulfilling prophecy where the open market houses being built to secure a proportion of affordable homes actually provide the accommodation for immigrant retirees as well as commuters to work outside the Park. It adds import to the statement by a policy officer at the Peak Park who said that the appropriate vision for a national park spans a time scale of 100 or more years. In that context the cyclical problems of the housing market are not the most important consideration. *“You can’t build your way out of a cyclical housing supply problem”*.
- 4.3** From the range of comments which have come forward in the consultations for the NPP and the Main Issues Report of the Local Development Plan, it is clear that there is increasing resistance to the imposition of developer-led housing in the Cairngorms National Park. With a projected target of 3,000 houses (25% affordable) over the next 20 years at a time when the PDNPA have projected 500-1,000 houses (all affordable), the question that the PDNPA asked itself in 1989 must come to the fore. Can the Cairngorms National Park landscape and natural heritage cope with the present rate of house building and if not what provisions are being made for a long term vision when the tap is turned off? It is clear from the Peak Park that this is possible and indeed publicly acceptable, but there is a further problem with the way that the CNPA does business and that is illustrated by a social attitudes survey commissioned for the NPP.
- 4.4** When residents and visitors were asked what they liked about the National Park, a common answer was that residents and tourists liked the *‘planned, stone-built villages’*. The developer-led approach to house building, epitomised by Aviemore, High Burnside, Kincaig and Carrbridge do not meet that criterion. They are urban intrusions in the landscape of the National Park and are the direct result of allocating large parcels of Greenfield land which developers then fill with identikit houses unfitted to a national park setting. The Peak Park has avoided the worst of this kind of development by insisting on stone and slates in discrete, small scale developments which blend with the historic architecture. More often than not the land selected is vacant and unused so the end result is enhancement of the Park environment and a win/win for Park residents who meet the residency criteria. Discussions with CNPA officers suggest that their solution lies in better design of housing, but it hard to imagine that in a developer-led approach where there are stipulations required for cross subsidy that this situation will improve. It is the scale of the developments and their locations which need to be addressed.
- 4.5** It is clear that there remains a large gulf between the policies and actions of the CNPA over the issue of housing and the views of many environmental NGOs. Insofar as these policies are driven by the

Scottish Government's approach to economic development and a failure to recognise the special planning policies which should apply to national parks, the NGOs can seek to make representation to Government for a change of course. In particular there is a generalised requirement for all planning authorities, including NPAs to meet targets for supply of land for housing and to use the cross-subsidy method for private developers to provide affordable houses. As has been shown from the example of the Peak District National Park a more appropriate mechanism for meeting housing need in a national park setting is to remove references to targets and to identifying a 'generous supply' of land for housing and replacing it with a Rural Exceptions Policy in concert with local occupancy restrictions. Whilst this methodology has its detractors, such detractors invariably come from the developers, the housing authorities and the social scientists all of whom focus on how to provide affordable homes without reference to the environmental consequences.

- 4.6** The Peak Park has accepted that the consequences of allocating a generous supply of land for housing is no longer sustainable. The PDNPA is not a housing authority, nor is the CNPA. The fourth aim, to promote sustainable development, has been wrongly used by the CNPA to justify acting like any other planning or housing authority when in reality there should be no real difference in approach between the Peak and the Cairngorms, both having a primary responsibility to conserve the natural and cultural heritage. If the CNPA finds itself to have acted illegally in the adoption of its Local Plan, then it is to be hoped that the example of the Peak Park will offer a new direction and perhaps even a change of heart over such developments as An Camas Mor.

Yours sincerely, Timothy Ambrose, Treasurer, for and on behalf of the Directors of The Cairngorms Campaign

ATTACHMENT 2

Our response to the National Park Partnership Plan (2017 – 2022) Consultation

"Issue 7: Housing"

We generally support the "Targets/Preferred Direction" except that it needs to be more tightly defined:

- i) all new housing (not more) should be accessible to people who live and/or work in the National Park;*
- ii) deliver a higher proportion of affordable and social housing;*

- iii) do not build any more second homes – do not assess this number purely as a percentage of new houses built.

The CNPA has continued with policies and a plan for housing that it inherited at its inception. It has over 10 years later had more than sufficient time now to understand both what is required and what is suitable for a National Park. National Parks have been legislated for as they have different priorities and interests so it is time to celebrate and establish these differences. Housing should only be built in the CNP if it meets local needs and does so in perpetuity.

There needs to be a move away from the term “affordable housing” unless it is defined as being sold at a price that is within range of the residents and can be retained as such when the property is sold. In many recent developments affordable housing built under planning permissions has not been accessible to the local population, and has not contributed to reducing the local authority waiting lists as the people on the lists cannot afford the newly built housing. This results in affordable housing being sold as second and holiday homes. Policies and solutions proposed within the National Park Plan must be realistic in solving the perceived issues within the National Park. Take a current case where, in Boat of Garten, single bedroom “affordable” properties are being offered at a starting price of £180,000, which is well beyond the range a young couple, employed within the National Park, are likely to be able to secure a mortgage on.

The current and historical model of a landowner making money by selling land and a developer making profit from luxury house building needs to be rejected. The CNPA needs to show a much stronger leadership role in planning the right sort of development, for instance it is well established from community consultations and evident in the background evidence to the Partnership Plan, that smaller houses are needed. These allow young families to get established in the housing ladder and older residents to down size, thereby freeing up some existing larger housing.

There are plenty of solutions to these needs evidenced within other designated National Parks (both within the UK and further afield). The CNPA by now should have studied these models and developed its own thinking as to the unique approach that suits our communities taking the best and most pragmatic from these other examples.

As just one practical suggestion and linked to “Community Empowerment” the CNPA should be helping with professional guidance development of small infill sites within existing communities, to be owned in perpetuity by community groups, housing associations and trusts for the specific provision of people working and living in the CNP and at affordable prices. Local builders should be used wherever possible and skills developed and retained to provide highly sustainable housing design using local materials as much as possible. They should be prepared to enable compulsory purchase of such small pieces of land and should work to prevent any exercise of the right to buy local authority social housing within the National Park, and should be able to offer shared-equity housing as a suitable alternative. Using such methods we may be able to halt the attrition of loss of agricultural, semi-natural forested and “wild” land adjacent to our communities, whilst still ensuring a sufficient pool of housing for residents.

As indicated in the background evidence, we would support further work being done on residences not currently identified as second homes via the council tax data system but are being let out for holidays part of the year, maybe used by the owner occasionally and vacant for the remainder, most likely with some tax advantages. These should be taxed as second homes. Council tax should never be less for a second home and there is potential for some increased revenues for the councils in increasing it further, but it has limited use in discouraging the purchase of second homes. Owners

could just not declare it as a second home and if they can afford one are unlikely to be deterred by a higher tax.

Since the data demonstrating the need for more residences is driven by the statistics that show more people are living alone there should be a presumption against residences with more than two or three bedrooms. Social housing should have 3 bedrooms with some family sized houses having bigger bedrooms. Existing larger residences should also be regarded favourably within the planning policies where they are to be divided into smaller units to allow elderly people to stay in their own homes but with closer neighbours.

It is not possible to understand from the proposed plan how much is within the CNPA's power to require via planning policy. We consider the evidence is that within the CNP planning enforcement by both the local authorities and the CNPA to be very poor. The Planning Committee seems proud of the fact that it approves 97% of the applications; we do not think this is a cause for such pride as it implies very little enforcement of planning powers, which after all are put in place to protect the broadest community and social needs from being eroded by private interests. Since the current policies aren't delivering housing that meets the identified needs of the residents either the policies are inappropriate or are not being applied correctly for the CNP.

The current and historical model of relatively large developments imposed upon communities and very much opposed by locals for both reasons of cultural and natural heritage has to stop before the CNP communities lose their character and more and more look like the suburban towns outside the CNP. The current model dilutes communities and reduces the quality of life; furthermore it undermines and detracts from the visual appeal of the National Park which has been shown many times to support and underpin the income earned from tourism across the CNP, the Highlands and Scotland. The CNP Park Plan and policies need to safeguard the appearance of our communities, their environs and the hillscapes if this major source of income to our area is to be retained."

END